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SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS SPOTLIGHTS THREE 'LIVING LEGENDS' OF THE SECOND DISTRICT

LOS ANGELES -- Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today led the Board in recognizing three living legends of the Second District for serving as beacons of light and paving the way for future generations.

The Supervisor welcomed Mrs. Rosa Contreras, a 110-year-old patient at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center (MLK-MACC); Mr. Lee Wesley Gibson, a 100-year-old who is the oldest known Pullman Porter in Los Angeles County; and Ms. Julia Lee, a 98-year-old community activist.

"This morning, we have the distinct honor and pleasure of recognizing our rich history, while also looking toward our bright future. Today, we have the opportunity to appreciate some of the "Living Legends" who reside in the Second District," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

The Supervisor praised Mrs. Rosa Contreras, who has remarkably lived to enjoy 110 years of life and who, "in all her wisdom, chooses to receive service from the Geriatrics Clinic at the MLK-MACC."

Born in 1900 in San Jose Del Carmen, Mexico, Mrs. Contreras has been a proud resident of Los Angeles County for the past twenty years. She has demonstrated her faith in the quality of services provided by the Department of Health Services, particularly at the MLK-MACC.

Mrs. Contreras was joined by her two daughters, Maria De La Cruz Leon Contreras, and Maria De Jesus Contreras, who often board a public bus with her to receive care at the MLK-MACC. Also accompanying Mrs. Contreras was Deborah Christian, who is among the many caring employees at the MLK-MACC.

Earlier this year, Mr. Gibson, who celebrated 100 years of life, was recently identified as the oldest known living Pullman Porter in Los Angeles County. His story was chronicled by the Los Angeles Times.

Born in Keatchie, Louisiana and residing in Texas before eventually making his home in Los Angeles in 1935, Mr. Gibson was hired in 1936 as a coach attendant for the Union Pacific Railroad Company. He was later promoted to Pullman Porter in the 1960s.

The origin of Pullman Porters is attributed to the Pullman Palace Car Company, which originally hired only African-American attendants, and was most famous for the development of railroad sleeping cars.

The Supervisor congratulated Mr. Gibson on reaching the 100 year milestone and for being a part of such a significant time in American history.

Last, but not least, the Supervisor recognized Ms. Julia Lee, an active and civically engaged member of the community throughout her 98 year life. She has participated in numerous voter registration drives, fundraising efforts, forming block clubs, and continues to work with the homeless, children, as well as an advocate for seniors' rights, serving as a Senior Legislative Committee member for the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP)/Los Angeles.

Ms. Lee has also served as a lifetime member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

"I am certain that the examples of these three individuals will serve as beacons of light to guide the path of future generations," the Supervisor said.

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